

VZCZCXRO9856
RR RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM
DE RUEHGO #0093/01 0240920
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 240920Z JAN 06
FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3963
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0553
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 9343
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 3947
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1428
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3123
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 6444
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 4053
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA 0550
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 0538
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2485
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0157
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000093

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS; PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/24/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: HOME AFFAIRS MINISTER CUTS OFF NGOS

REF: RANGOON 79

RANGOON 00000093 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: A/DCM W. Patrick Murphy for Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) Summary: The GOB's Ministry of Home Affairs, without explanation or advance warning, issued orders on January 20 to six international NGOs to cease their operations in northern Shan State. The six NGOs, who collaborate with UNODC on alternative income and harm reduction projects, are quietly working to reverse or mitigate the GOB's "shocking" action. The move may be part of a GOB plan to more tightly control UN and NGO activities by eventually consolidating their activities under the Ministry of Planning (reftel). We suspect, however, that the personal disregard the Minister for Home Affairs, Major General Maung Oo, holds for the international community may be the real explanation. End Summary.

12. (C) The GOB's Ministry of Home Affairs, through its interagency counternarcotics entity (the Central Committee for Drugs Abuse Control - CCDAC), notified six international NGOs on January 20 that it had nullified their existing cooperative agreements (MOUs) and immediately suspended their activities in Burma. The official letter offered apologies "for any inconvenience this action may cause," but gave no further explanation.

13. (C) The six INGOs are MSF-Holland (known in Burma by its Dutch acronym, AZG), Aide Medicale Internationale (AMI), Malteser International, the Asia Harm Reduction Network, the Burnet Institute, and an Australian-funded regional HIV/AIDS project. All six of the INGOs operate in northeastern Shan State under their MOUs with Home Affairs and collaborate with the UNODC to develop alternative income sources for former poppy farmers and also to support UN harm reduction projects.

14. (C) Several of the NGOs -- including MSF, AMI, and Malteser -- have MOUs with other GOB ministries for

humanitarian assistance programs elsewhere in Burma, such as assistance for returned refugees in Northern Rakhine State and various health projects in Kachin State, Rangoon Division, and other locations. A UN official told us that the Home Affairs directive did not apply to NGO activities conducted in cooperation with other ministries and none of the NGOs planned to depart Burma in the near future.

15. (C) A UNODC official (PROTECT) told us that the GOB notification was a "shocking surprise" that came without warning and without explanation. "Our programs will suffer," she said, "whatever the reason for the decision." UNODC and the NGOs are uncertain about the motives behind the dramatic order to cease operations, but speculate that the move may be linked to a broader GOB tightening of international community activities inside Burma (reftel).

16. (C) The six NGOs affected by the Home Affairs order are quietly consulting with each other and with UN agencies to determine a course of action. Possible next steps include seeking clarification from Home Affairs, advocating a reversal of the directive in order to avoid any disruption in the delivery of vital humanitarian assistance, or quickly seeking replacement MOUs with other ministries. NGO officials expressed to us their intent to work quietly behind the scenes to seek redress, and to try to avoid going public with news of the GOB's nullification of their MOUs.

COMMENT: THE GENERAL'S DISREGARD

17. (C) Perhaps the Ministry of Home Affairs has severed its relations with NGOs in anticipation of a larger GOB plan to more tightly control UN and NGO activities by consolidating their activities under the Ministry of Planning (reftel). The abrupt curtailment of these NGO activities, however, is

RANGOON 00000093 002.2 OF 002

more than mere bureaucratic bungling and creates an immediate and gaping hole in international assistance to impoverished, ethnic minority populations in northern Shan State.

18. (C) We suspect that the Minister of Home Affairs' personal disregard for the international community has more to do with the nullification of INGO MOUs. He earned his current, and powerful, position after serving as the regime's thuggish military commander in Rakhine State, where he oversaw the systematic abuse of Muslims and heavy-handed treatment of the UN agencies and NGOs that operate there. Now he appears to be duplicating those policies at the national level. End Comment.
VILLAROSA